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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [KHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: QADURA FARIS AND U/S BURNS: FATAH REFORM

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Former PLC member Qadura Faris told U/S Burns in a January 20 meeting in Jerusalem that Fatah needs serious reform and reform-minded leaders must work to restore public confidence in the party and Fatah's ability to administer the PA. He said efforts to establish a National Unity Government (NUG) should continue, and he does not believe Palestinians will support early elections unless they are certain all efforts to form a NUG are exhausted. He said if early elections are held, he believes Fatah can regain the majority, having learned from its mistakes in the January 2006 PLC elections. End Summary.

Elections: Fatah

¶2. (C) During his January 20 Jerusalem meeting with U/S Burns, former Fatah PLC member Qadura Faris said PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) should exhaust all efforts to establish a NUG before he decides to call early elections. Faris said the majority of Palestinians will not support early elections if they believe there is a chance for a NUG. He said Palestinians have lost confidence in the political system, but this confidence would be regained if Abu Mazen can establish a NUG that ends the international restrictions on the PA and ends the inter-factional violence. Faris added that productive negotiations with Israel will further buttress confidence in Abu Mazen's government.

¶3. (C) Faris attributed Hamas' victory in the January 2006 elections primarily to mistakes made by Fatah and said Fatah needs serious reform. He said only reform-minded leaders, such as jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, can restore public confidence in the ability of the party to lead and to provide public services. However, if elections are held soon, he believes Fatah can regain 20-30 PLC seats by avoiding the mistakes of the last election. He pointed to the fact that Fatah split the party vote by running more candidates in district races than the number of individual seats as a crucial mistake that was emblematic of Fatah infighting. He said Fatah must be unified as a party, if Palestinians are to believe that it can represent all Palestinians. Faris suggested that correcting this mistake and insisting upon party discipline could be close the gap between Fatah and Hamas in early elections.

GOI Impact

¶4. (C) Faris said the GOI had helped Hamas to achieve electoral victory, particularly by "freezing" the progress following Abu Mazen's election as President. He said Hamas leaders point to the fact that Abu Mazen has met repeatedly with the GOI leadership, but his meetings have brought few tangible improvements to Palestinians. He said Hamas also

persuasively argues that during periods of negotiation, the number of settlers and checkpoints in the West Bank has increased. He said that Hamas is able to argue that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are, therefore, only a fig leaf or distraction that allows the GOI to change "facts on the ground" in the West Bank. He said Hamas successfully argues that Fatah's policy of negotiation has failed to end the occupation or change GOI behavior and only its own policy of resistance will succeed. Faris said that the GOI can and should help Abu Mazen to regain public support by demonstrating that his policy of engagement and negotiation with the Israelis will bear fruit. He said he believes that if the GOI helps improve daily lives of Palestinian removing checkpoints, facilitating the movement of goods, and working with the PA on security issues, there is the potential for progress toward Israeli-Palestinian peace. Faris urged that the GoI not ask Abu Mazen to do more than is politically possible, such as rapidly disbanding certain Hamas-run security forces, and make those requirements a condition of continued talks.

WALLES